

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19364

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CSCE, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET PROTEST ON DISTRIBUTION OF "ANTI-SOVIET"
MATERIALS

REF: MOSCOW 10785 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: USA DIVISION MFA MADE LOW-KEY COMPLAINT DECEMBER 10 ON
"PROVOCATIVE BEHAVIOR" OF EMBASSY'S CONSULAR COUNSELOR AND FORMER
SCIENCE COUNSELOR IN DISTRIBUTING RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE, ISRAELI
"ZIONIST" MATERIALS IN MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE. EMBASSY PROPOSES REPLY
IN SAME LOW KEY. END SUMMARY.

1. ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED ON USA MFA DIVISION
COUNSELOR V. I. TRIFONOV AT LATTER'S REQUEST ON DECEMBER 10.
TRIFONOV DELIVERED LOW KEY COMPLAINT ON ALLEGED PROVOCATIVE
BEHAVIOR OF CONSULAR COUNSELOR GROSS AND FORMER SCIENCE
COUNSELOR LOEBNER IN DISTRIBUTING RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE ANTI-
SOVIET, ZIONIST MATERIALS PUBLISHED IN ISRAEL, TO PARISHIONERS
OF MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE. AFTER READING NON-PAPER, TRIFONOV
HANDED IT TO ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR (COPY BEING
POUCHED TO EUR/SOV).

2. BACKGROUND OF CITED INCIDENT AS RECOUNTED BY
CONSULAR COUNSELOR IS AS FOLLOWS:
DURING EARLY SPRING 1976, FORMER CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE, MOSCOW CHORAL SYNAGOGUE, M. TONDEYTNIK, ASKED GROSS
TO OBTAIN RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE ISRAELI MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAERS.
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TONDEYTNIK, WHO SERVED IN OST AS NOTORIOUS TOOL OF REGIME AND WAS

PROBABLY KGB MEMBER, APPEARED TO WANT PUBLICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES. GROSS AGREED TO COMPLY AS PART OF ONGOING EFFORT TO CULTIVATE TONDEYTNIK. DURING CONSOFF'S VISIT TO ISRAEL IN APRIL, HE ASKED EMBASSY TEL AVIV TO POUCH MATERIALS TO BE PROVIDED BY ISRAELI MK AVRAMOV, WHO WAS FULLY AWARE OF TONDEYTNIK'S BACKGROUND AS WELL AS PROBABLY REASON FOR HIS REQUEST. MATERIALS WERE RECEIVED AT EMBASSY MOSCOW IN JULY OR AUGUST AND GROSS BROUGHT THEM TO SYNAGOGUE TO DELIVER TO TONDEYTNIK ON A SUNDAY MORNING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER (PROBABLY SEPTEMBER 5), WHEN HE ALSO MADE ANNUAL RENEWAL SYNAGOGUE SEAT TRADITIONALLY RESERVED FOR EMBASSY OFFICER. TONDEYTNIK WAS NOT IN AND GROSS LEFT THE PERIODICALS AND BOOKS (A TOTAL OF ABOUT 15 OR 20) IN TONDEYTNIK'S SYNAGOGUE OFFICE. (ON ANOTHER OCCASION SHORTLY BEFORE THAT, GROSS, TONDEYTNIK AND TWO OR THREE CONGREGANTS, EXCHANGED FIVE OR SIX JEWISH RELIGIOUS CALENDARS PUBLISHED IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES.)

3. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, TONDEYTNIK WAS STRIPPED OF HIS OFFICE SOMETIME LATER DURING THAT SAME MONTH AND BY JEWISH NEW YEAR (SEPTEMBER 25-26), HE WAS NO LONGER IN OFFICE. SYNAGOGUE CONGREGANTS, WHO SEEMED PLEASED BY NEWS OF HIS OUSTER, WERE EITHER UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO EXPLAIN HOW IT HAD COME ABOUT. THE CLOSEST TO AN EXPLANATION WAS A STATEMENT BY ONE CONGREGANT THAT "TONDEYTNIK HAD OUTSMARTED HIMSELF." IT IS, OF COURSE, NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT FACT THAT "ZIONIST" PUBLICATIONS WERE IN HIS OFFICE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY USED AGAINST HIM.

4. EMBASSY PROPOSES TO GIVE REPLY ORALLY AND WITH NON-PAPER IN HARMONY WITH LOW-KEY SOVIET PRESENTATION OF COMPLAINT. EMBASSY PROPOSES POINT OUT THAT MATERIALS WERE REQUESTED BY FORMER OFFICIAL OF JEWISH COMMUNITY, WHO APPEARED TO WANT FIRST-HAND INFORMATION ON CONTENT OF RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE ISRAELI PUBLICATIONS. THE MATERIALS WERE DELIVERED IN SEPTEMBER 1976 BY GROSS TO OFFICIAL'S OFFICE AT LATTER'S REQUEST AND WERE NOT DISTRIBUTED TO THE CONGREGANTS; NOR WAS LOEBNER WITH HIM AT THIS TIME. WE PROPOSE TO NOTE THAT FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI AGREEMENT CALLS FOR "FREER AND WIDER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION OF ALL KINDS" AND THAT EVEN ASIDE FROM THE RELEVANT REQUEST OF THE THEN SOVIET OFFICIAL OF A RECOGNIZED RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY, THE CITED INCIDENT CLEARLY FALLS WITHIN GUIDELINES ENCOURAGED BY CONFIDENTIAL

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FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI CONFERENCE.

5. WE WOULD ALSO REITERATE OUR PREVIOUS REQUEST THAT MINISTRY FURNISH TO EMBASSY CLEAR GUIDELINES ON OBJECTIONABLE MATERIALS, PREFERABLY IN THE FORM OF A SPECIFIC LIST OF PROSCRIBED PUBLICATIONS. UNLESS THE MINISTRY FURNISHES SUCH GUIDELINES, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR THE EMBASSY TO ISSUE DEFINITIVE GUIDELINES TO ITS EMPLOYEES.

6. DEPARTMENT'S CONCURRENCE OR COMMENTS REQUESTED. MATLOCK

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